Handout 2: Principles of Access and Equity

Access and equity are principles of social justice.

Equity relates to fairness. It recognises that some people are more disadvantaged than others in being able to access services and facilities and therefore there is a responsibility to address this lack of equity.

Access is the capacity people have to physically enter a building or space and also to use a facility or service.

Many people with a disability do not have the same access to places and services as other people because their needs in areas such as mobility and communication have not been met.

Access and equity are concepts against which all services should be measured. They will be reflected in how decisions are made about who is eligible for a service, how resources are allocated, how the needs of people from diverse backgrounds are met. Access and equity are covered in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Barriers to access are often encountered in the following areas:

- Transport - e.g. no lifts at train station, limited availability of modified taxis
- Building design - e.g. no ramps and rails at entrance and exit, doors too narrow, bathrooms not modified
- Use of services - e.g. reception counters too high, information not available in a range of languages
- Communication - e.g. staff not trained in using alternative communication systems
- Culture - e.g. not meeting religious or cultural dietary requirements
- Equipment - e.g. service not meeting equipment needs such as lifting devices
- Staff and community attitudes - e.g. refusing a service based on a person's appearance or medical status.

Library Links
Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission at www.hreoc.gov.au,
The WA Disability Services Commission at www.dsc.wa.gov.au,
ACROD NSW at www.acrodnsw.net.au.